

The Census Estimation Session included two papers followed by a discussant and a floor discussion. The first paper, authored by Elaine Zanutto and Alan Zaslavsky of Harvard University, was entitled Estimating a Population Roster from an Incomplete Census Using Mailback Questionnaires, Administrative Records, and Sampled Nonresponse Followup. This paper presented a method of modelling characteristics of nonresponding nonsampled households. The second paper, authored by Machell Town and Robert Fay of the Census Bureau, was entitled Variance Estimation for the 1995 Census Test: Methodology and Findings. This paper presented several variance estimation applications, including sampling for nonresponse followup and variance estimation for the use of the dual system estimator and the Census plus methodologies. Following these presentations, Roderick Little of the University of Michigan discussed both papers. Mr. Little stated that both papers presented contrasting approaches to the same problem, and that these two approaches should be formally compared. Additionally, he stated that research on the use of administrative records is very important, particularly since there are many problems associated with them (for example, lack of geography).

Alan Zaslavsky gave a brief response to the discussant, mentioning that accuracy at the block level for the census is not as important as accuracy for various aggregate levels (for example, the district office level). He also suggested that their model could be expanded for use in a nonresponse followup unit sample.

Fritz Scheuren of George Washington University had a few comments about the use of administrative records in a census. He stated that it is important that administrative records will potentially be used in a census environment; that the Census Bureau must research administrative records in order to better understand them and how to use them; that duplicates within the administrative records are an important issue to learn how to manage; and that coverage in administrative records may be more complete than in a census.

Cary Isaki of the Census Bureau stated that the unit sample for nonresponse followup yields better results than a block sample, and that the motivation for testing a block sample in the 1995 Census Test was the belief that housing unit adds could potentially be missed with the unit sample methodology. This was not found to be true in the 1995 Census Test.

Betsy Martin of the Census Bureau addressed a question to Alan Zaslavsky regarding the block covariates that he briefly mentioned in his talk. Mr. Zaslavsky replied that the block covariates need to be developed over time from information from sampled nonrespondents. Robert Fay of the Census Bureau also added to the discussion on this topic, stating that some research had been done within the Census Bureau by Woltman and Schindler on variance estimation which showed a difference between block and unit sample estimates approximately equal to a factor of three; and that vacant and deleted units within a block also have important variance implications.

Bill Bell of the Census Bureau commented that the use of administrative records has the potential to reduce bias and to help address variance estimation issues, but both are dependent on the quality of the administrative records, the size of the nonresponse followup sample, and the size of the nonsampled nonresponse universe.

Ruth Ann Killion, the session chair, announced that the Census Bureau will make the conference

proceedings available on the internet.